

Up to May, 1951, I was scheduled to go to Codrington College in Barbados to start my training for the Anglican priesthood. The Archbishop was very excited. His “golden boy” was on the right trajectory: First, theological college, then an apprenticed period in one of the smaller islands of the Caribbean. I would return to Guyana to take over one of the larger parishes in Georgetown, becoming a Canon in the process and, after that, as he said playfully, who knows “the Bishop’s throne”? This was a progression that was very neat and tidy, which did not allow for any changes of plan or changes in me.

But, a very fundamental change did come.

At a quarter past seven one morning that May, there was a strong knocking at the door of my great aunt’s house. Just out of the shower, and not properly attired, I rushed to the door and opened it. Six of my fellow students from Central High School, with beaming faces, said, cryptically, “Bobby, we really got to celebrate this one, big, big”. “Celebrate what?”, I asked. “You mean you don’t know?”, they said. “Mean what?”, I queried, with a blank look on my face. “Hell, man, you mean you don’t know that you have become an ‘open scholar’ to the University College of the West Indies?”, said the most talkative of my school chums. “There must be some mistake”, I replied.

They then produced a local newspaper and pointed to where it said that Robert Moore of Central High School had won an Open Scholarship, the highest award the University College bestowed on high school graduates.

I thanked them and, when they departed, I called my great aunt and told her there must be some mistake. I could not possibly win an Open Scholarship , that is to say the most prestigious fully-funded scholarship open to six-formers across the West Indies. She, more realistic than I, was jubilant.

I had taken the Scholarship exam along with about 40 other candidates, including 6 from Central High School, a few months earlier. But nobody, including myself, expected that I could be placed among the 6 Caribbean recipients.

The Principal of the premier school in the country, Queen's College, was certain that his school would win two of the six scholarships . The newspaper report, he dismissed, as a clerical error committed at Mona, especially as one of his students bore the name of Moore, but with different initials. He instantly cabled the Registrar of UCWI, to point out the mistake, as he saw it. He was appalled by the Registrar's reply which read, "There is no mistake, the Moore from Central has got the scholarship". Captain Nobbs was reported to have said, " The fledging University of The West Indies has committed a major blunder ".

I went to Mona at the end of September, 1951, with a great deal of trepidation, for I felt I was entering University College under false pretences. Wouldn't the university expect its entrants to have a background of very distinguished teaching and the latest educational resources.? What is more, as I was told by a Queen's College student already at UCWI, the students at Mona were looking out for this Guyanese character who had *not* been to Queen's, and I was therefore the object of a great deal of inspection. – not the most comfortable atmosphere in which to arrive. Needless to say, the Archbishop was beside himself with glee. "His protege" had proved himself equal to the best of Queen's, and he had written in his Diocesan magazine that I was the first Guyanese headed for the Anglican priesthood to enter UCWI.

What he could not predict was that this would be a major turning point in my career trajectory. By the end of my second year at Mona, I had reached the conclusion that the priesthood was not for me. Totally excited by the history I was learning, I felt that I must go back to Guyana and spread this awareness -- as a teacher. The Archbishop was devastated. Our regular correspondence of the first year and a half stopped completely and it would take my graduation at Mona and return to Guyana to renew our relationship.



Latin, History and English Literature were the three subjects I chose for the general B.A. degree. I was totally at home with Latin, totally excited by History, but less than comfortable with my performance in English Literature. But what made me a conspicuous figure on campus was my enthusiasm for debating. Freshmen were given an opportunity to prove themselves at the podium within their first month at Mona, and I immediately attracted the attention of the "veteran debaters" on campus. My first exposure to a university audience was in a debate on the feasibility of a Federation of the British Caribbean, as a threshold to independence. The vice-chancellor, the registrar, the head of the extra-mural department and a weighty group of academics were in the audience, and so were nearly all the citizens of Mona as well as visitors from Kingston and its suburbs.

My side was proposing the motion and those opposing were a formidable trio of brains, with considerable pre-campus experience. Just before I got up speak, as the third in my team, a fit of uncontrollable jitters seized me. I took a deep breath and asked Heaven's assistance. I rose and started to talk in what became known as the 'Bobby Moore fashion' a combination of witty comment and the sweet reasonableness. The audience, including the academics and the administrators, seemed engaged by the approach and debating style of our side. Except the Registrar. In his comments on the debate, he

said that it was intolerable that someone speaking on an issue as grave as a West Indian Federation should have aimed to amuse the audience. The rebuke was clearly aimed at me. The judges thought otherwise. One of them said that “wisdom without humour is like bread without butter”. Our side was declared the winner, to the immense satisfaction of the audience who gave us a resounding ovation. That began a career of debating which took me all the way through my four years at Mona.

My co-debaters were Bertram Collins, a Guyanese who became a distinguished West Indian academic and an advisor to the governments of the region and Roy Dixon, a Jamaican with a fine scholastic record who went off to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar in my second year. We were a formidable team and debated within and beyond the university.

Another of my UCWI pre-occupations was with the Student Christian Movement (SCM) of which I was chair for three years. We brought to the campus Christian thinkers from many parts of the world, who had come to Jamaica on holiday. And, as President of the SCM in 1953, I attended an SCM conference at Matanzas in Cuba. There I encountered a number of distinguished Protestant thinkers who greatly altered my Anglo-Catholic outlook. One was a German theologian, a passionate admirer, and former student of the world-renowned

American-political theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr. From then on Niebuhr enjoyed pride of place on my reading list, deeply influencing my approach to Marxism and Capitalism and my understanding of the relationship between Christianity and history. It was at Mona that I was first exposed to the writings of Paul Tillich, a monumental German theologian whose interpretations of the Bible left a deep and lasting impression on me.

My other great hobby was the stage. And the dramatic genre I took to was satire, especially such as found in the plays of Bernard Shaw. It was on the stage that I could express aspects of my personality not seen in day-to-day campus life. My acting had its roots at good ol' Central High School, where I performed the role of Dr. Faustus in the play of that name, and appropriately fell off the stage in a genuine collapse at the end. Oscar Wilde's witty and satiric plays ~~that~~ also caught my fancy, and some of my contemporaries remember this more than anything else in my Mona career.

Campus life made other impact on me. My girl-friend for the four years I was <sup>there</sup> on campus was Sheila Evans-Smith, who was superb at tempering my more illusory enthusiasms, often questioning my suitability for the Anglican priesthood and helping me to understand the techniques of literary criticism. She graduated with an Honours Degree in English and later on



became a much admired figure at the United Nations. Another good friend was Brian Tucker, the absolutely engaging son of an English Baptist Minister, with whom I got into all sorts of unholy scrapes on campus. He was to serve as a Baptist Minister in an impoverished region of the North of England and, like his father, he later became a very wise President of the British Baptist Union.

Lloyd Stanford for three of my four years on campus had the room immediately below me in Taylor Hall. Tall, stately and patrician in appearance, he was "a man for all seasons" with a passion for Latin American literature. Magnificent as Henri Christophe, the tragic Emperor of Haiti in Derek Wallcott's memorable play of that name, to this day his contemporaries still talk about that performance. On top of all that, he was much admired by many of us for his remarkable ease in the company of the academic staff who enjoyed his urbane civility. He and I were to meet again in Ottawa in 1974, and, to this day, we laugh about the fact that our first encounter was anything but cordial. I was furious that at three o'clock one morning his Latin American rumbas were disturbing my sleep and I went down to his room, just below mine, to give him a piece of my mind. He, duly contrite, explained that he thought the music radiated *outwards not upwards*. He toned down the volume with some reluctance and offered to buy me a hearing aid to soften the intrusion!

I have very, very happy memories of my time at Mona, the culture of which changed my outlook completely and sent me back to Guyana with a profound sense of being a citizen of the Caribbean region rather than just a Guyanese.

One of my most extraordinary experiences was having tea with Princess Alice, the Chancellor of UCWI and Great Aunt to the Queen. It came about this way. The Chancellor had met the Rev. William Murray, Anglican Chaplain at Mona and was singularly un- impressed by him. She then announced to Dr. Grave, the Vice-Chancellor, that she would dismiss him. The Vice-Chancellor with immense tact had informed the Chancellor that she had no authority to do so. But she refused to believe him. It was a very dicey situation

After much consultation with members of the Senate, Dr. Grave decided to get an Anglican undergraduate to persuade Her Royal Highness that what she was contemplating was not possible. So he dispatched me to King's House, the Governor's Residence, where the Royal Couple was staying.

During a very sumptuous and friendly afternoon tea the Old Lady suddenly asked me what I thought of William Murray. I painted a very favourable verbal portrait of the Chaplain, emphasising his popularity not only with Anglican students but with the student body as a whole, whether they were believers or not. I went out of my way to mention how caring the



Chaplain was to students with nervous disorders. The more she pressed her case, the stronger my verbal portrait of Murray became. Suddenly she dropped the subject and proceeded to ask me questions about Guyana which had recently endured a political upheaval. When my time came to depart the Chancellor was most gracious, saying that she enjoyed having tea with a West Indian who was so interesting and so witty. Dr. Grave was particularly relieved when I reported to him how well the event had gone. And the Chancellor never again said anything about William Murray. And I never reported to him what my meeting with the Chancellor was all about.